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SUBJECT: REGIONAL ELECTION RESULTS: UNITED RUSSIA WINS AS  
EXPECTED

REF: A. MOSCOW 11172  
[1](#)B. VLADIVOSTOK 00133

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SUMMARY  
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[1](#)1. (SBU) As expected, the Kremlin's United Russia received a plurality or majority of votes cast in the elections for nine regional legislatures on October 8. Other key findings:

-- the experiment with managed, two-party democracy seems to have succeeded from the perspective of the Presidential Administration and will probably be repeated in the March 2007 elections;

-- the center-regions vertical of power still works;

-- western-oriented, democratic parties will likely have to merge and "re-brand" themselves if they want to remain in the political landscape;

-- slightly lower-than-expected turnout (31-50 percent) made pensioners key players in the elections. Their votes went to the parties of power, the Communist Party, and the Party of Pensioners;

-- United Russia might face a stronger challenge from its Kremlin opponent once the Party of Life, the Party of Pensioners, and Rodina merge October 28. The Communists remain a limited but significant presence;

-- United Russia fared better in rural areas than it did in urban areas. Almost all opposition seats were won in urban areas.

-- as expected, election irregularities were alleged by party leaders and the press. End summary.

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PARTY REACTIONS - CLAIMS OF VICTORY...  
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[1](#)2. (U) The ruling United Russia (YR) party claimed victory in all nine regional elections. It received an absolute majority of votes cast in three and a plurality in the remaining six contests. The General Secretary of the YR General Council, Vyacheslav Volodin, in a post-election press interview was triumphant, describing the elections as an overwhelming demonstration of support for YR. Volodin dismissed assertions that the Party of Life (RPL) had emerged from the elections as the main opposition to YR, noting that the Communist Party (KPRF) had bested the RPL in six of the nine elections. (Note: RPL was disqualified from the ballot

in two of those six elections. The fact that YR felt the need to downplay RPL's performance is in itself telling.)

13. (SBU) Lipetsk RPL representatives rejoiced in their results (Ref A). Although final results are not yet in, RPL is assured of at least two seats and possibly as many as four seats in the new Council. More unexpectedly, the Party of Pensioners (RPP) gathered almost as many votes as the RPL. Although better than expected, the RPP representative was disappointed and claimed that, "had the election been honest," his party would have received 15 percent of the vote. Whatever the case, the RPP and RPL results bode well for the RPP-RPL-Rodina alliance that is to be formalized on October 28. (NOTE: Post will be interested to see how these parties actually work together. Their combined expected eight seats should give them at least a voice in local affairs. Prior to the election, they had both lobbied for directing more resources to those in need.)

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...WHILE SOME CRY FOUL  
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14. (SBU) Some party leaders complained of foul play and election violations. Sergey Mironov, head of the RPL, alleged there had been election law violations in Yekaterinburg and that the head of the Sverdlosk region electoral commission was to blame. Mironov cited the distribution of flyers warning voters not to vote for the three merging parties (RPL, RPP, Rodina) because they would soon cease to exist. KPRF head Gennadiy Zyuganov complained that Mironov himself had violated campaign laws by having a long interview published in a Lipetsk newspaper after the election canvassing deadline. Zyuganov also claimed that

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ballot boxes in the countryside had been stuffed for YR.

15. (SBU) In Tuva, RPL election observers cited obstacles and harassment that nearly prevented them from monitoring the elections. The observers claimed that first their plane was denied landing at the airport in Tuva, and then the bus that they had chartered in a neighboring region was stopped by the authorities twice in the early morning of October 8. According to press reports, RPL has submitted a formal request for an investigation. Tuva is RPL's strongest region; it took 35 percent of the vote to United Russia's 49 percent.

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KEY CONCLUSIONS FROM THE ELECTION  
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16. (SBU) Moscow observers of the regional elections highlighted the following moments of interest in the October 8 contests:

-- the LDPR's poorer-than-expected performance was traceable to the fact that Vladimir Zhirinovskiy's volatile personality is wearing thin with voters. Zhirinovskiy himself, in the estimation of Moscow observers, campaigned less energetically in the nine regions than he has in the past. "Zhirinovskiy is getting old," said one Embassy contact; he doesn't have the drive he once had." (LDPR's share of the vote declined from 12.8 percent in 2003 to 6.2 percent on October 8;

-- the Tuva results are unprecedented for such a traditionally "administratively-controlled" region. The pattern in the past has been for the Republic's administration to ensure the overwhelming victory of one, Kremlin-controlled party. This time around, YR and RPL together garnered 80 percent of the votes, with a significant minority of that number (32.5 percent) going to the Moscow's number two official party;

-- "ideological" parties generally did poorly on October 8.

The "democratic" parties were not factors, while support for Rodina and LDPR sagged. Some observers attributed the slump to cynicism or apathy on behalf of the more passionate part of the electorate. Other factors cited: Zhirinovskiy's loss of luster; and, among "informed" voters, an awareness that Rodina Chairman Rogozin is not longer in the Kremlin's favor;

-- voter participation was slightly lower than expected. There was a general "north-south" correlation, with more northern, less administratively controlled regions seeing lower turnout and traditionally more-controlled regions getting more voters to the polls;

-- there is an urban-rural divide in the electorate. YR polled better in rural areas, other parties fared better in cities. Voter turnout was substantially higher in rural areas. For example, in the Lipetsk Oblast, voter turnout was more than 70 percent in rural areas, and under 30 percent in the cities. Only one of the five non-YR winners was elected outside of the city of Lipetsk.

-- it was a "pensioners" election. The low turnout meant that the votes of pensioners who, it is estimated, are three times more likely to vote than Russians from other age cohorts, were decisive. High rates of pensioner participation translated into strong showings for the KPRF, the Russian Party of Pensioners, and the parties of power;

-- the regions still dance to Moscow's tune. YR and RPL --read Moscow-- wanted to win 50 percent of the vote and they came close in every region except Astrakhan.

-- political observers argue that the experiment with controlled, two-party democracy was a success from the perspective of the Presidential Administration and will be continued, after the October 28 Rodina-RPL-RPP merger, into the March 11 elections to be held in 17 regions;

-- if western-oriented democratic parties are to remain present in the political landscape, they will likely have to merge and "re-brand" themselves. In Astrakhan, the Republic Party -- supported by Yabloko and SPS -- garnered only 1.1 percent of the vote, far below the 7 percent they had hoped for. They competed nowhere else.

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DETAILED ELECTION RESULTS  
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17. (U) Below are the election results as reported by the Central Election Commission of the Russian Federation, supplemented by press reports. Distribution of seats in the legislature is given where available. Seats in the legislatures are distributed through a combination of party list and single-mandate seats. Final official tallies and seat allocations will be reported on October 14.

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Astrakhan Voter turnout: 43 percent  
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	Percent	Seats
United Russia	39.7	n/a
Party of Life	0.0	n/a
Pensioners	9.9	n/a
Rodina	16.5	n/a
Communists	13.9	n/a
LDPR	7.1	n/a
Against All	6.1	n/a

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Chuvashiya Voter turnout: 42 percent  
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	Percent	Seats
United Russia	53.9	n/a

Party of Life	0.0	0
Pensioners	0.0	0
Rodina	6.5	0
Communists	20.3	n/a
LDPR	9.3	n/a
Against All	4.4	-

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Jewish Autonomous Republic Voter turnout: not reported  
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	Percent	Seats
United Russia	55.3	n/a
Party of Life	4.6	0
Pensioners	9.9	n/a
Rodina	4.5	0
Communists	18.5	n/a
LDPR	4.5	0
Against All	(not on ballot)	

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Karelia Voter turnout: 31 percent  
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	Percent	Seats
United Russia	41.1	n/a
Party of Life	17.1	n/a
Pensioners	12.7	n/a
Rodina	0.0	0
Communists	13.5	n/a
LDPR	9.4	n/a
Against All	(not on ballot)	

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Lipetsk Voter turnout: 44 percent  
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	Percent	Seats
United Russia	51.8	41
Party of Life	12.0	4
Pensioners	11.4	4
Rodina	0.0	0
Communists	10.9	4
LDPR	4.4	0
Patriots		1
Independent		2
Against All	5.0	-

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Novgorod Voter turnout: 31 percent  
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	Percent	Seats
United Russia	44.7	n/a
Party of Life	5.8	0
Pensioners	0.0	0
Rodina	3.4	0
Communists	15.0	n/a
LDPR	7.2	n/a
Against All	4.7	-

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Primorye (see also Ref B) Voter turnout: 39 percent  
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	Percent	Seats
United Russia	48.3	32

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Party of Life	4.6	0
Pensioners	9.1	2
Rodina	2.4	0
Communists	12.2	3
LDPR	6.1	0
Freedom	8.7	3
Against All	(not on ballot)	

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Sverdlovsk -- Voter turnout: 28 percent  
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	Percent	Seats
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United Russia	40.5	15
Party of Life	4.6	2
Pensioners	9.9	4
Rodina	4.5	0
Communists	18.5	3
LDPR	4.5	0
Against All	(not on ballot)	

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Tuva Voter turnout: 50 percent

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	Percent	Seats
United Russia	46.3	n/a
Party of Life	32.5	n/a
Pensioners	0.0	0
Rodina	2.3	0
Communists	5.4	0
LDPR	3.6	0
Patriots	3.6	0
Against All	(not on ballot)	
RUSSELL		